

Closing the Achievement Gap: A Growing Need for Cultural Proficiency

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Learning Point Associates

Our Vision

An education system that works for all learners.

Our Mission

We deliver the knowledge, strategies, and results to help educators make research-based decisions that produce sustained school improvement.

Session Outcomes

Participants will do the following:

- Examine performance, growth data, and the identified need for culturally responsive instruction to address achievement gaps.
- Increase awareness of beliefs and perceptions about race, culture, and poverty that may support or impede culturally responsive teaching.
- Begin developing a common language to use for discussing cultural responsiveness.

Session Norms

- Be in the moment.
- Seek to learn from one another.
- Listen actively.
- Be open to everyone speaking their truth.
- Recognize that we may experience discomfort.
- Synthesize the information through your own professional situation.

Technical Problem or Adaptive Challenge?

- Technical problems can be solved in agreed-upon ways with current know-how.
- Adaptive challenges require stakeholders to change their values, beliefs, and behaviors.
- A common leadership mistake is to treat adaptive challenges as technical problems.

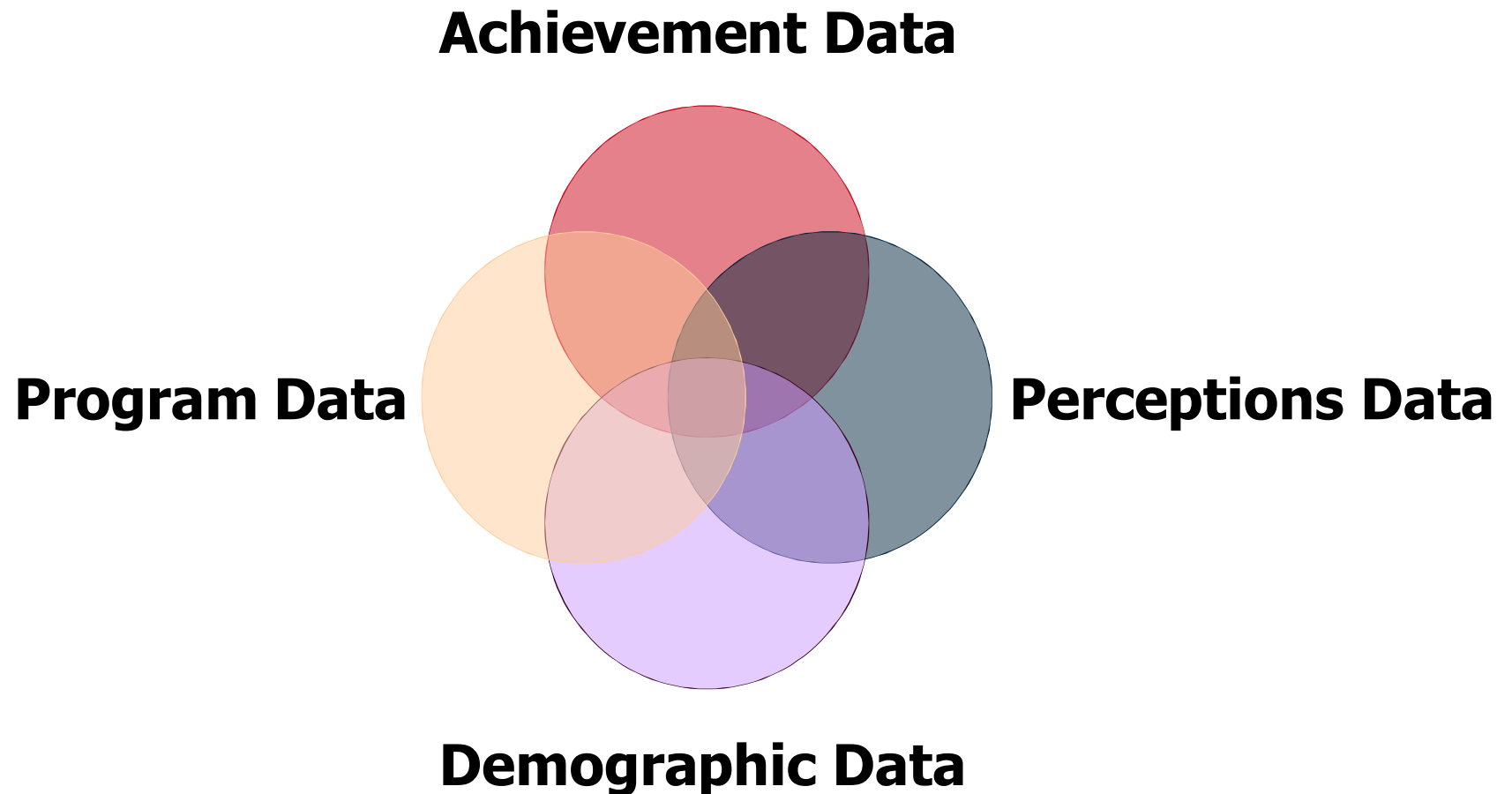
Source: Singleton & Linton, 2006

Adaptive Change Is Uncomfortable

- It challenges values, beliefs, and behaviors.
- It requires loss, uncertainty, and sometimes disloyalty to one's people and culture.
- Some discomfort is necessary, but too much can be immobilizing.

Source: Singleton & Linton, 2006

Where the Work Begins



Achievement Gaps

What Are Achievement Gaps?

Achievement gaps are the observed disparities on a number of educational measures (e.g., standardized tests, grade point averages, dropout rates, college enrollment and completion rates) among the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race or ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

The Gaps Go Beyond Test Scores

- Advanced Placement course enrollment
- High school graduation rates
- College entrance rates
- College completion rates
- Wages

Factors That Contribute to the Gaps

➤ Student parent background

- *Resources:* Caldas & Bankston, 1997; Coleman, 1966; Hossler & Stage, 1992

➤ Teacher quality

- *Resources:* Cochran-Smith, 2001; Kaplan & Owings, 2003; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004

➤ Funding

- *Resources:* Benabou, 1996; Greenwald, Laine, & Hedges, 1996; Lee, 2005; Mintrom, 1993

Factors That Contribute to the Gaps

- Teacher expectations and relationships
 - Resources: Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Ferguson & Mehta, 2004; Good & Brophy, 1987, 2000
- Stereotype threat
 - Resources: Steel, 1995, 1997
- Cultural mismatch
 - *Resources:* Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2002; Lindsey, Roberts, Campbell, & Jones, 2005; Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2005

Locating the Problem

- The way we talk about a problem does several things:
 - It locates the source of the problem.
 - It defines the range of solutions we consider.
 - It tells a story that conveys values and reinforces beliefs.

Source: Hill, 2008

Reflective Question

- What is my role in addressing the districts' achievement gaps?

Source: Hill, 2008

Culture

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Purpose

- To look deeper into beliefs related to cultural competence.
- To provide a baseline of information and a means for assessing individual growth.

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Process

- Step 1. Individually assess your cultural competence for each item and each section of the survey.
- Step 2. Identify a recorder and be prepared to share an insight, area of strength, or area of growth with your group.
- Step 3. Share your initial thoughts about cultural competence.
- Step 4. The recorder will report out to the larger group.

Working Definition of Culture

- *Attitudes and beliefs* held by persons both inside and outside the school, particularly attitudes about schooling, change, students, and other persons.
- The cultural *norms* of the school, composed of the set of informal, unwritten rules governing behavior in the school and community.

Working Definition of *Culture*

- “The *relationships* of persons inside the school, on both an individual and group level.”
 - “The ways in which teachers relate to other teachers, students and teachers interact, and the relationships between teachers and administrators are examples of this element.”

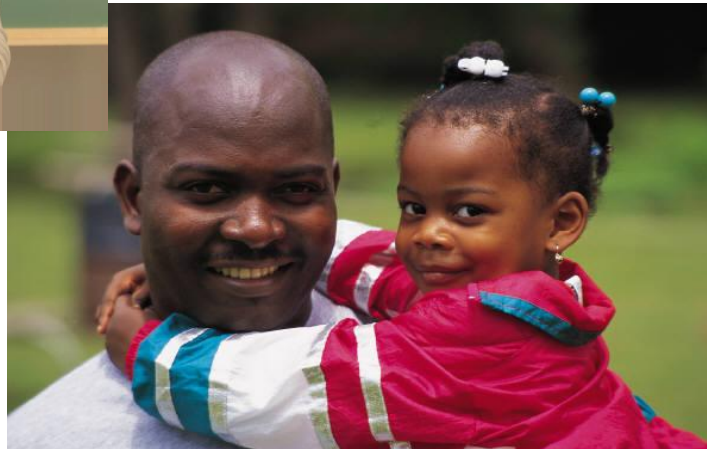
Source: Boyd, 1992

Some Working Definitions

- Nationality – Citizenship either by birth or naturalization.
- Ethnicity – Language, ancestry, food, dress, musical tastes, traditions, values, and political and social affiliations.
- Race – Denotes color characteristics, the meaning affixed to the melanin content found in the skin, hair, and eyes.

Source: Singleton & Linton, 2006

Culture



"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."

—Audre Lorde

Source: National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, *Creating Culturally Responsive Systems*

Cultural Proficiency

What Is Cultural Proficiency?

- A mind-set
- A way of being
- The use of specific tools for effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that emerge in diverse environments

Source: Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003

What Is Cultural Proficiency?

- Policies and practices at the organizational level, and values and behaviors at the individual level, that enable effective cross-cultural interactions among students, teachers, administrators, and community.

Source: Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003

What Does It Look Like?

- Your core values.
- Your organizational structure and systems.
- Your language and behavior.
- Your organizational norms, traditions, and practices.

Preconditions to Doing This Work

- School leaders must do their own self-reflection first.
- Cultural proficiency is a journey *with* our colleagues (not done *to* them).
- We begin where people are, not necessarily where we would like them to be.

Four Cultural Proficiency Tools

1. The guiding principles

- Underlying values and assumptions of the approach.

2. The continuum

- Language for describing both healthy and nonproductive policies, practices, and individual behaviors.

Source: Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003

Four Cultural Proficiency Tools

3. The essential elements

- Five behavioral standards for measuring and planning for growth toward cultural proficiency.

4. Understanding the barriers to change

- Caveats that assist in responding effectively to resistance to change.

Source: Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003

The Guiding Principles

- The underlying values of cultural proficiency
 - Culture is a predominant force.
 - People are served by the dominant culture.
 - It is important to acknowledge the group identities of individuals.
 - Diversity within cultures is important.
 - Respect the unique cultural needs that members of dominated groups may have.

Source: Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003



Magnetic Statements and Courageous Conversations

Guiding Questions

- How can we generate courageous conversations about achievement gaps at school?

Guiding Questions

- What tools and strategies promote and sustain courageous conversations?
 - Using achievement and perception data (e.g., the continuum)
 - Gathering stakeholders to share multiple perspectives
 - Structuring conversations with tools, protocols, and processes (e.g., Microlab, Tuning Protocol, Kiva)

What Is a Courageous Conversation?

- What does it look like?
- What does it sound like?
- What does it feel like?
- How can it be used to enhance teaching and learning to improve student achievement?

What Attitudes or Dispositions Are Necessary for Courageous Conversations?

➤ Recognition of opposites



➤ Commitment to dialogue

- Self-regulate negative emotions.
- Create increased trust and safety.
- Seek deeper understanding and empathy.

What Skills Are Necessary to Have Courageous Conversations?

- Reflection
- Ownership of statements
- Active, engaged listening
- Validation of another's point of view
- Empathy

Culturally Responsive Instruction

Indicators of Engaged Learning

- Vision of learning
- Tasks
- Assessment
- Instructional model
- Learning context
- Grouping
- Teacher roles
- Student roles

Principles of Culturally Responsive Instruction

- Active teaching
- High expectations
- Student-controlled discourse
- Cultural competence
- Relevant curriculum and instructional practices

See Keyes, Burns, & Kusimo, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Williams, 2003; Zeichner, 1996

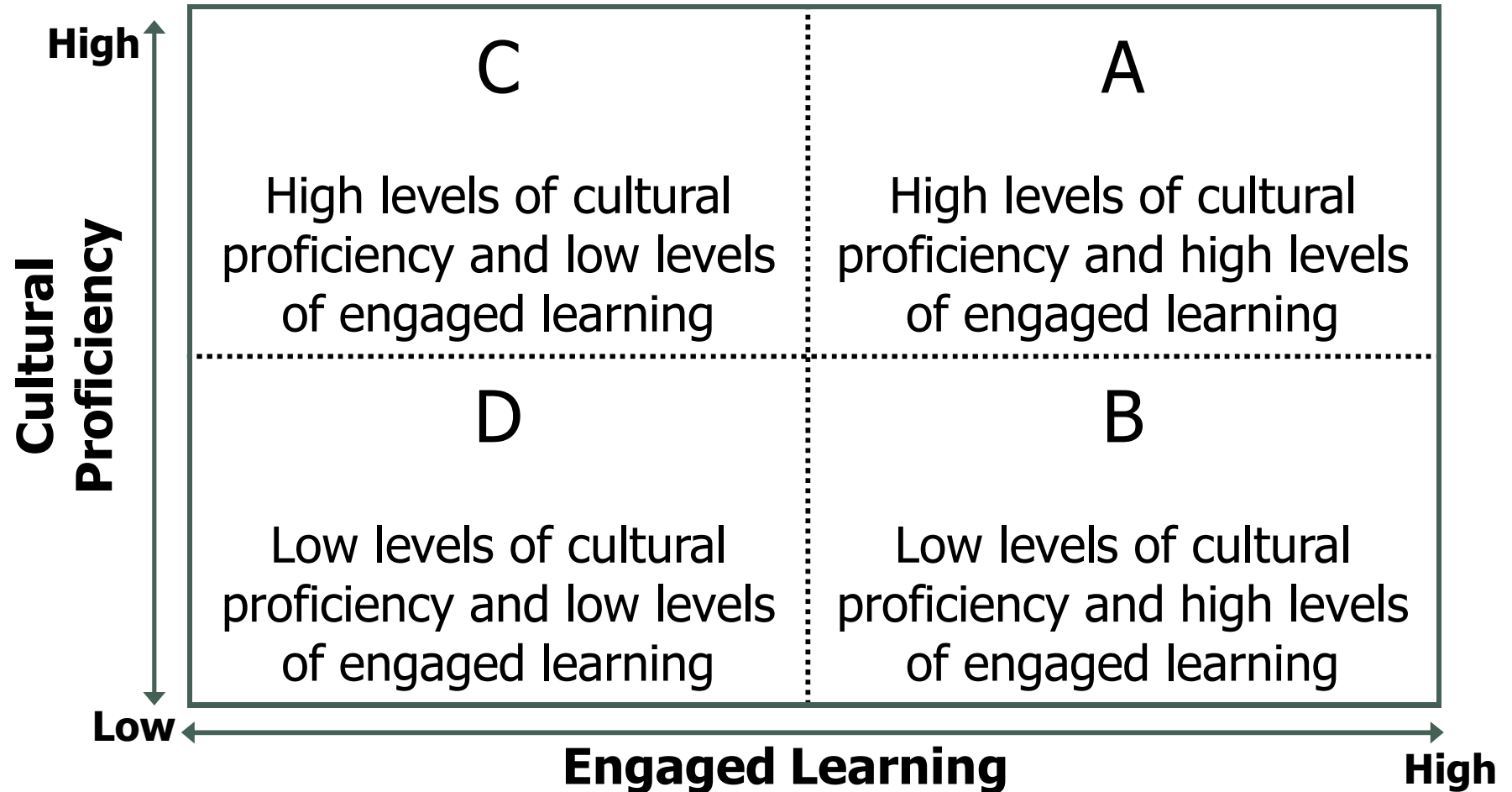
Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Provides instruction that acknowledges that culture is central to learning.
- Encourages students to learn by building on the experiences, knowledge, and skills they bring to the classroom.
- Infuses family customs as well as community culture and expectations throughout the learning environment.
- Focuses on relationships, curriculum, and instructional practices simultaneously.

The Critical Elements of Culturally Responsive Teaching

- It is always student centered.
- It has the power to transform.
- It is connected and integrated.
- It fosters critical thinking.
- It incorporates assessment and reflection.
- It builds relationships and community.

Engaged Learning and Cultural Proficiency Quadrant



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